

VZCZCXRO6189
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHMOS
DE RUEHIHL #0077 1261832
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 061832Z MAY 06
FM REO HILLAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0617
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0603
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 0668

C O N F I D E N T I A L HILLAH 000077

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/6/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: DIWANIYAH SECULAR POLITICIAN ON MILITIAS, SCIRI POLITICS

CLASSIFIED BY: Alfred Fonteneau, Regional Coordinator, REO

Hillah, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Abid Muslim, head of the Iraq National Accord (INA) slate (Allawi) in Diwaniyah Province, spoke to REO Officer on May 3rd, touching upon the stand-off between the Mahdi Militia (MM) and the Badr Organization and decision-making on the provincial council. According to Muslim, the Mahdi Militia are benefiting from a decision by the predominant SCIRI party to avoid confrontations between Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Militia on one hand and the SCIRI-affiliated Badr Organization and the Iraqi police on the other. While occasionally showing their muscle in occasional "sporadic incidents", the MM is slowly, but deliberately accumulating power and moving into properties and mosques around Diwaniyah, sometimes directly under the nose of the Iraqi Police (IP), according to Muslim. He stated that the twenty-seat SCIRI bloc in the Provincial Council continues to dominate deliberations, but that moderates, including the Allawi bloc, occasionally team up with the Sadrist for a total of fifteen seats. Nonetheless, Muslim complained, the SCIRI party rarely fractures on votes and furthermore, dominates sub-district politics. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) Abid Muslim, the head of the INA slate in Diwaniyah, spoke on May 3rd to the Diwaniyah IPAO making initial courtesy calls in the Province. Muslim agreed with the Provincial Governor and other local officials that Diwaniyah is one of the safest provinces in Iraq, and explained that in his view, the relative quiet in Diwaniyah stems from the reluctance of the majority SCIRI party and its militia, the Badr Organization, to confront the Mahdi Militia. The Mahdi Militia, Muslim said, is slowly and steadily accumulating influence, in part by acquiring property and mosques through the acquiescence of the Badrist-controlled Iraqi police. He commented that as the Mahdi Militia publicly occupy buildings in front of the police, flouting public order, local teenagers have taken to wearing Mahdi Militia style black clothing, knowing that the police will be afraid to confront them.

¶3. (C) Nonetheless, Muslim said, if the new national government is strong and forceful, forcing adherence to the rule-of-law, the Mahdi Militia will fade away. COMMENT: Muslim was not so subtly referring to the desirability of including Iyad Allawi in the new government as the head of the National Security Council. END COMMENT

¶4. (C) Muslim touched on local provincial politics, complaining that the twenty-seat SCIRI majority on the Provincial Council remains monolithic, rarely fracturing. He noted that issues and personalities often were more important than party lines on the provincial level. A loose grouping of moderates (INA), Da'wa, and somewhat surprisingly, the five seats occupied by Sadrists could occasionally muster fifteen seats. Nonetheless, the "poorly educated" SCIRI Provincial Council members always voted

according to the wishes of the current and/or former Provincial Council Chairman.

¶5. (C) Muslim said that the Provincial Council was debating whether or not to hold sub-district local elections in conjunction with provincial assembly elections. The other option would be to organize local elections following the provincial elections. COMMENT: From our viewpoint, the former is desirable as it would ensure Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) oversight of both elections. END COMMENT However, Muslim somewhat ironically commented, in the end, sub-district elections did not seem to greatly matter. He asserted that under local election by-laws drafted in part with the assistance of USG-funded contractor RTI, the SCIRI-dominated majority on most local councils have the power to remove minority members almost at will.

FONTENEAU